

March 1, 2011

Senator Harp, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Courtney Bourns, a resident of West Hartford. I'm here in support of the Governor's Proposed Budget, urging increased funding to towns for Open Choice seats:

I want my grandchildren who live in West Hartford to have an economically and racially integrated education. It reflects the real world. They will be better equipped to be good citizens and to contribute to this world into which they emerge as adults, if their education prepares them well to understand and appreciate the growing diversity they will encounter.

I believe all of Connecticut's children should have an equal opportunity for a quality integrated education, as that has been defined by our Supreme Court – reflected in the 15-year old Sheff vs. O'Neill court agreement. They are our children, our future and their educational success is determined here and will affect the quality of life in Connecticut in the years to come.

Research shows that Connecticut residents overwhelmingly say they support voluntary, two-way integrated education programs. Open Choice provides a win/win opportunity if it is adequately funded so that suburban school districts don't bear the financial burden of participating.

Thus it's my hope this committee and the Legislature will support provisions in the Governor's budget to expand the program by increasing the reimbursement for towns that take additional children from Hartford.

Thank you.

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